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ABSTRACT

Four case studies examined the effects of using taped books to teach reading to at-risk elementary school students in rural West Virginia. The study involved two kindergarten students who were identified as at risk for developing reading difficulties and two first-grade students who had been classified with a learning disability. The intervention, which lasted 32 days, consisted of listening to audiotapes or watching videotapes of eight books that typically contained a refrain or sentence repeated throughout the text. Over the course of the study, the order of story presentation was random, with the restriction that the same story was not presented twice in a row or twice during the same school week. Students were randomly assigned to either the audio group, where they listened to an audiotape and turned the pages of their own copy of the book, or the video group, where they watched the story being read without having a copy of the book. Results indicated that both approaches were successful in that all four children improved in their ability to recall story details, familiarity with print and print concepts, motivation and focus on learning activities, and sense of their own reading ability. Books on tape gave these at-risk children opportunities for language-rich literary experiences that increased their interest in reading and improved their self-confidence toward learning to read. (LP)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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USING TAPED BOOKS WITH CHILDREN AT-RISK: FOUR CASE STUDIES

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For some children, the problems related to reading difficulty may stem from a lack of exposure to reading materials in the home (Heath, 1982; Kirby, 1992; Manning, Manning & Cody, 1988; Morrow, Paratore, Gaber, Harrison & Tracey, 1993; Scarborough, Dobrich & Hager, 1991; Teale, 1981; Warren, Prater & Griswold, 1990). For these children, it may be that they have not had enough exposure to reading materials and need more contact with written material than the teacher can provide. For the children who fall behind their peers in reading acquisition, getting back on level in a timely fashion is often quite difficult. In such cases, the proverbial "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" seems apt. Programs must be implemented which will help children succeed before they experience reading failure. When parents are unable to give their children the start they need, the responsibility shifts to the schools to provide missing opportunities for early success.

Providing children with books on audio and video tape is a simple time efficient method to bring those at-risk to a comparable level as those who have been exposed to a print rich environment. While this seems like an obvious solution to expose children to reading materials, very few classrooms actually have listening centers with taped books in them. It appears that teachers are using other methods to expose their students to print which may not be as effective. This simple strategy needs to be encouraged on a wider scale since it appears to improve children's interest in reading and improve their self-esteem. Teachers can easily replicate the results of this study with children in their own classrooms.

During part of a larger study in a rural West Virginia county, four children, two of whom were enrolled in a Title 1 program and who were at-risk for reading difficulty and two who had been classified with learning disabilities, were specifically observed to determine the effects of a repeated story presentation using books on audio and video tape. The effects on reading achievement and self-esteem demonstrated by these children attest to the potential benefits of this type reading instruction. The gains made by the four children who will be focused on should provide encouragement for helping students develop an interest in reading and opportunities to be successful and included in activities with their peers.

Donnie was a 6 year old kindergartner attending the most rural of the three schools used in this study. Donnie enjoyed riding his bicycle, watching television and scary movies at home. His mother used two words to describe Donnie- smart and stubborn. Donnie received Title I services as well as speech services and during the following academic year was retained in. Donnie's kindergarten teacher reports that Donnie has a lot of trouble remembering his numbers and that he could not identify all of the letters of the alphabet. He frequently got letters mixed up and has difficulty with reversals. Donnie also had a hard time deciding what he should be paying attention to in the classroom.

The other kindergarten child was a 6 year old named Sabrena. At the beginning of the year her teachers thought that Sabrena did not listen when directions were being given and that she did not comprehend during storytime. The speech teacher noticed that Sabrena was having difficulty understanding the use of pronouns. For instance, while talking Sabrena would say, "You were there" when she was talking about herself. Then she would be corrected with "No, YOU were there" and she'd say, "Oh, WE were there". After several weeks of this, school personnel began

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to realize that it was not a case of Sabrena not paying attention. The classroom aide helped break assignments into smaller pieces for Sabrena but she still had some trouble following directions given orally. Sabrena learned many coping strategies like watching the other children for cues and then acting accordingly. She also appeared to do best when new tasks are modeled along with providing auditory directions. Sabrena had difficulty finding the words to express herself on occasion according to her teacher. When asked a question that she was unable to answer, she continued to think about it even when everyone else had moved on. It was believed that the answers were there, she just could not get them out. Her teacher reported that Sabrena knows all of her letters and sounds. At least once a week the class writes in a journal on a given topic. Sabrena has a tendency to write about whatever comes into her mind even if her topic is unrelated to the assigned topic. Many stories are unclear until Sabrena explains them and even with explanations she appears to have her facts a bit confused.

Robert was one of the first graders who was followed throughout the intervention. Robert received full-time learning disabilities services for reading and spelling and behavior disorder consultation services the year after the study was completed. He received Title I services for reading for three years and repeated first grade. During reading instruction, Robert spent a great deal of time trying to sound out words but usually ended up guessing at the word. His teacher felt that Robert needed to develop a larger sight word vocabulary to help him with this problem. Spelling was also a weakness due to the fact that he is a phonetic speller, according to his teacher.

Chad was an 8 year old who is classified as learning disabled. His kindergarten teacher recalled that when Chad first came to school he was unable to hold a pencil or a crayon. He could not spell or write his name and he had difficulty holding utensils to eat properly. By the end of kindergarten, he was able to write his name and his teacher felt that he was very proud of his accomplishment. Chad was promoted to first grade where he continued to receive Title I services. By the end of first grade Chad was able to do addition facts up to 5. However, his reading was still on a kindergarten level. He was unable to put letters and sounds together to form words. He could spell a few three letter words from memory. His teacher also reported that he had a very hard time sitting still and that he was constantly moving but appeared to be unaware that he was. At the end of first grade he was classified as learning disabled and sent to another school in the county in order to receive services. Working with Chad academically, his special education teacher felt that he was not an auditory learner and had trouble attending to tasks. She felt that Chad needed to have many examples before he understood an assignment.

The intervention consisted of daily listening or watching one of eight books which were commonly recommended, predictable stories which contain either a refrain or sentence which was repeated throughout the text. Some of the books had a rhyming pattern to them. Over the course of the study the order of story presentation was random within blocks of eight stories, with the restrictions that the same story did not occur twice in a row (as the last story in one block and the first story in the next block) and that the same story was not presented twice during the same school week. The intervention lasted 32 school days. Students were randomly assigned to either the audio group where they listened to the book on audio tape and turned the pages of their own copy of the book or the video group where they watched the story being read on videotape without having their own copy of the book.

Donnie was randomly assigned to one of the auditory groups with four girls. He was cooperative throughout the interventions and seemed to look forward to hearing the stories. After the intervention Donnie was able to recognize that the print contained the message, that when we read we go from left to right and then return to the left on the next line. He also was able to follow along and match word by word with the reader. Interestingly, he was also able to recognize the meaning of quotation marks as meaning that someone was saying something. Several of the stories contained quotation marks, however they were never explained to the children. Reviewing the qualitative field notes collected during the intervention, it is apparent that Donnie made the

greatest gains in his interest in reading. While talking about the stories on Day 6 Donnie said, "I hate words- they're junk. They make your heart blow up". On Day 18, the third time reading Happy Birthday, Moon, after the researcher mentioning that Donnie read the majority of the story with the tape he said that he didn't know how it read. It was pointed out to him that he read this story and he sat up straight in his chair, smiled and said, "yes, not bad for someone who doesn't know all of his letters! Well, I know H and B" (pointing at the letters in the title Happy Birthday, Moon. On Day 24, after hearing If You Give a Mouse a Cookie the third time, Donnie said that he loved this story and on Day 31 he said "I know a bunch of [this story] cause I read it!".

As the number of story repetitions increased so did the amount of time Donnie spent with the story. At first, he began reading before the tape by looking at the pictures and then he began reading after the tape, and gradually he began reading with the tape. Eventually, beginning with Day 18, he would try to read over the words with the voice on the tape and finger point to the text he was reading.

One of the most rewarding parts of watching Donnie's reading development during the stories was to see him recognize letters and words. His confidence in his reading ability began to increase. Donnie started to take control of the stories when he began finger pointing as he read. He mouthed the words to the stories and he was able to answer simple comprehension questions about the stories. Donnie's off task behavior also decreased when his interest in the stories increased. It appeared that having stories presented repeatedly enabled Donnie to feel confident with the printed word.

Sabrena had experience with print because her mother read to her every night. Sabrena worked very hard in school. However, her teachers noted that she had been having receptive and expressive language difficulties. Sabrena, like other children in kindergarten, was very picture focused in the beginning of the intervention. She seemed to look at the pictures and responded with answers to questions that were based on the pictures, rather than the text. Part of her reliance on the pictures may have been due to her receptive language difficulties. During the first set of stories, Sabrena would look at the cover of the book, identify whatever was on the cover and then look to the end of the book to see the last picture. Then she would try to follow along. Sabrena also seemed to rely on others for clues as to when to laugh and when to turn the page. This may be because this is a coping strategy that she used in her regular classroom. After the stories were over she would raise her hand to talk about the stories but she couldn't remember anything to say. When asked specific questions about the story like what kinds of food did Gregory like she would shrug her shoulders. During the first reading of The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything (Day 8) Sabrena remembered that the "lady wasn't scared of anything and that the hat, head, shoes, shirt, and pants all found the lady". This was the first time that Sabrena remembered details from the story.

As Sabrena became more familiar with the stories she began to listen more to the text and repeat what had just happened in the text. During the second reading of The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything (Day 10) Sabrena was trying to read a few words with the tape. She was able to say all of the motions that the clothing made (clomp, wiggle, shake, clap, and nod) and she knew that the pumpkin head said Boo boo. On many days Sabrena would repeat isolated words. For example, while reading Gregory, the Terrible Eater, (Day 13):

Text:	Gregory ate too much junk
Sabrena:	junk
Text:	Gregory tossed and twisted all night long
Sabrena:	twisted
Text:	Gregory ate two eggs, juice and wax paper
Sabrena:	orange juice

Sabrena also began to remember details from the stories. After reading Who's in the Shed (Day 12) she remembered that she liked when the animals all ran away. After If You Give a Mouse a Cookie she said, "I liked when he draw (sic) pictures. I liked when he colored, There was a mouse. There were cookies. There were letters. He looked at the book". She was still relying on others to help clue her in to some of the details. When other children would mention parts of the story Sabrena would fill in pieces also. For instance, in one story a child was talking about the mouse hanging his picture up and Sabrena knew that it went on the refrigerator.

By the third time through the stories Sabrena began to rely more on her own listening abilities and told others when they were on the wrong pages. She also began to finger point with the reading and try to follow along in the text. She began to answer questions that required inference, like where did bear get the hat in Happy Birthday, Moon and what did Gregory eat for breakfast in Gregory, the Terrible Eater. She also began to read longer pieces of text after the tape. For Sabrena, the repeated presentations seemed to allow her to become more familiar and comfortable with the stories. Due to her language processing difficulties, Sabrena may need to hear text over and over to really obtain meaning. Sabrena's comprehension and retelling of the stories increased as repeated presentations were made.

Working with Robert was often very frustrating, and yet rewarding. Robert was the only one of the four students followed as a case study who had been assigned to the video group. Most of Robert's reactions and comments are not typical of the rest of the children in the video groups. He had difficulty paying attention and controlling his impulsive responses, and was quite vocal during the video presentations. The time Robert spent outside of his classroom seemed to become a time for him to say whatever was on his mind. Robert did look forward to the interventions because he wanted to receive his daily attendance sticker and a reward at the end for participating (he was hoping for a new bicycle). While qualitative data did not indicate that the intervention had any effect on Robert, his test scores suggest that there was benefit.

As mentioned previously, beginning on Day 1 Robert was very vocal and restless during the intervention. During the first story he was predicting what was going to happen and asking questions about the video. He talked throughout and alternated between standing and sitting the entire time. The story Who's in the Shed (Day 4) presents a different animal on each page and cut out windows on the pages reveal pieces of who is in the shed. Robert tried to guess what animal would come next and what was appearing in the windows. When the bear appeared, he yelled "Bear" and then began acting like a bear by growling and using his hands like claws. He did not stop until it was time to return to the classroom. While it appeared that Robert did enjoy participating, he seemed to require a great deal of attention. He decided that the stories should all be read much faster during the second set and said that on a regular basis. He continued to discuss the stories with himself and to make up questions and answers for the text. One day he even started to repeat some of the text after the video during Who's in the Shed (Day 12). "Let me have a peep baaed the big white sheep. What did she see? Let me see said the pluck (sic) little hen". Then he got interested in the teeth that were showing in the pictures and said that it was an alligator, a wolf, and finally said he really knew that it was a bear. When the chicken tried to run away from the bear Robert began to crow like a rooster. He continued this type of behavior, repeating the story and acting out parts, for the rest of the week.

The third time through the stories Robert really seemed to know what was going to happen in each and he was able to retell large portions of the stories. After reading Who's in the Shed (Day 17) Robert said, "What is it? Let me take a peek said the white sheep. Let me take a peek said the cow. Now the old red hen. Let me take a peep said the old mare. Let me take a peek said the old hen. Let me take a peek said the old hen. Let me take a peek said the pig. How dare you stare said the old bear! Grrrr!" While he didn't have all of the story correct he had each of the animals correct and he remembered that they each asked to look into the hole to see what was in the shed. Apparently,

even though Robert never appeared to be paying attention to the videos, he was able to remember many of the details.

During the fourth reading of the stories Robert didn't even need to hear the stories before he could tell you what was going to happen. If You Give a Mouse a Cookie was just starting and Robert said, "If you give a mouse a cookie he'll ask for milk, then he'll ask for a straw. Then he'll ask for a napkin, then he'll ask for a mop, no a wash rag. Then he'll clean up the bedroom, the whole room. He might notice to clean up the whole house. Then he'll clean up his bedroom. He'll want a story read to him. He'll flip flop his pillow. He'll ask for a story. He'll need a magnet to hang up his picture. He'll ask for a cookie. He'll ask for a glass of milk. Robert even began to remember tiny details like a poem that was read in Ruby the Copycat. "I had a cat. We never met because he always stayed behind me. And we never met". The actual poem went, "I had a cat I could not see,

Because it stayed in back of me,
It was a very loyal pet-
It's sad we never really met."

Chad's IEP goals for reading were: 1) to put sounds together to form words including blends and digraphs (three to four letters), 2) to identify and use short and long vowel sounds in reading, 3) to retell stories in sequence after hearing and reading, 4) to review consonants and identify consonants and sounds consistently, and 5) to identify sight words on a first grade level. Both the regular and special education teachers stated that Chad could only read a few sight words and that he was not able to sound out words. As in the story of Leo the Late Bloomer, Chad really came into his own late in the intervention. In the beginning, Chad did not understand the concept of turning the pages when the bell sounded, or following along in the book with the story. He did not understand that if he listened to the story he would be able to talk about what happened. Then one day, in his own good time, Chad seemed to figure it all out.

Very little can be said about Chad in the beginning of the intervention. He came with his group everyday and was very quiet. in the beginning, Chad wouldn't really look at the book, he would look around the room and look at the other students without appearing to focus on anything. Turning pages was a real difficulty for Chad; he was always on the wrong page or flipping back and forth from the front to the back. During the second reading of Who's in the Shed one of the other students repeatedly told him that he was on the wrong page. She said, "Hey Chad, turn back to this page. You're on the wrong page. You're on the wrong page, turn back to the sheep. The cow, the cow, you're getting it wrong! OK, the horse, turn to the horse. The chicken, I'm telling him and he still gets it wrong. The pig. Now it's almost done. Chad you're gonna be done before us". At one point Chad flipped through the rest of the book but never found the page that everyone else was on. When questioned about being on the wrong page, he said that he was right. Chad never realized that when he was hearing "Let me have a peep baaed the big white sheep" that he shouldn't be looking at the picture of the cow. The next day was the same thing with Gregory, the Terrible Eater, Chad would be on the wrong page and the others would try to help and he never got back where he belonged. When asked what the title of the story was or what the story was about Chad would always respond that he didn't know.

Quite suddenly Chad began to respond to the stories on Day 18. One of the students was saying hello moon like an echo as the story did and Chad said the moon can't really hear. This was the first time that he mentioned any part of a story and demonstrated that he understood what it meant. He was on the right page and he began to predict what was going to happen.

Text: He hiked...
Chad: through the woods.
Text: He paddled across...
Chad: the water

He even began to talk to the others about the story. Even though his responses were somewhat bizarre, it was the first time that he had interacted with the students in his group. Child 1 said, "this story isn't real". Chad responded that it was, the bear talked to the moon. Child 2, "No, that's an echo". Child 1, "Bears can't paddle in a boat", Chad, "Yes, they can." Child 2, "No, you're confused". Then Chad started to mutter under his breath, stupid idiot and said, "Come on buddy" and clapped his hands together. This was the last time that Chad was not with the group on the right page.

Day 20 he came in ready to attend, he stayed with the group and the story, he began mouthing words from The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything. He even remembered that she saw the shoes first, then the pants, shirt, gloves, hat and head. The third time through Gregory, the Terrible Eater he said that he ate everything and that he ate 25 tires which made him sick.

Day 22, Is Your Mama a Llama? Chad repeated the title then:

Text: Is your mama a llama?
Chad: (before tape) no she is not. Oh! I said.
Text: No she is not is what Freddy said. I think your mama must be a
Chad: llama. (pause) Swan.

Then he began mouthing the words with the tape and before the tape recognized the cow, the seal, and the kangaroo. The most exciting event that day was that another student was on the wrong page and **Chad** corrected **him**. Chad continued to make progress answering questions, predicting what would come next, following along in the book, correcting other students when they were on the wrong page. Everyone in the group recognized the difference in Chad and made a point of telling him that he had done a good job when he was on task. This was really rewarding for Chad because he seemed to have few positive interactions with his peers during the rest of the school day.

The ways in which the case study children were effected by the intervention were typical of many of the children followed during the course of the intervention. There were some who only needed to hear the stories a few times to remember what was going to happen and there were others who, like Chad and Sabrena, needed to hear them over and over again before they made sense. However, it is important to note that children who appeared to be the lowest at the beginning of the intervention seemed to benefit the most. These children seem to have to work twice as hard as their peers to achieve the same result. This intervention seems to have allowed them the chance to interact informally and positively with their peers and they all seemed to enjoy the extra attention of coming out of the class to share the stories. Without any direct instruction many children began to pick up reading strategies from one another and their confidence in their reading ability appeared to grow.

While it is difficult to speak about commonality for the four very different children followed as case studies, all four had low scores and little success in reading related tasks. While it is doubtful that eight weeks of an intervention completely changed their attitude about reading, it seems that the repeated exposure to books provided a measure of success for all four of the children. The informal setting and daily successful experiences of remembering details from the stories and discussing the events of the books appears to have provided a foundation for improved motivation about reading. Each of the children looked forward to hearing the stories and eagerly shared their favorite parts of the books. As Sudzina and Foreman (1990) found, when children are given opportunities to listen to books on tape they report greater feeling of self-confidence in their reading ability. The opportunity for these children to develop an interest in reading that wasn't there previously is perhaps the most exciting part of this research.

Children with processing problems frequently appear to be a "few steps behind" their peers. It takes them longer to figure out directions and follow through on them. Comprehension of spoken materials and text read orally is also delayed. For children with receptive language difficulties like Chad and Sabrena hearing the stories over helped them to derive meaning from the text. They both

seemed to require all four presentations of the stories to be able to initiate discussions about the stories. They also benefited from the daily listening to help them develop the confidence that they were on the correct page and to actually be on the correct page. Tapes provide help for children who are having processing difficulties because the children can listen to them over and over.

For children with learning disabilities the opportunity to have positive group interactions with peers is very important. Providing books on audio and video tape allows children to work at the same pace and interact positively with peers while discussing the stories and sharing personal experiences. The time that is required for the story presentations does not take away from instructional time. The benefits include an increased ability to recall details, a familiarity with print and concepts about print, improved focus, and a developing sense of their own reading ability.

Children at-risk for reading failure and children with learning disabilities require more opportunities for language rich literary experiences than is currently afforded to them in the classroom. The repeated exposure to stories afforded by the use of books on audio and video tape has been beneficial for many of the children in this study. Teachers should be encouraged to use an intervention, like books on tape, to help their students improve their reading abilities which will not interfere with content instruction or require a great deal of teacher time or resources. This research provides needed information on the benefits of using video and audio taped story presentations which has not been specifically addressed in the literature. Children do enjoy listening to audio tapes read by the teacher. There is a familiarity with the tape that can't be found in commercially prepared tapes. A natural extension of programs which bring parents into the schools to read to the class is to have parents making tapes for the classroom. Parents could leave a recorded version of their story for the children to revisit during free time. Guest readers can leave tapes in the classroom and children can try to figure out who is reading, people like the librarian, principal, custodian, and cafeteria workers can all participate by making tapes.

Teachers need to have many resources available to them to help the children in their classes who come to school without the experience of having had books read to them at home. By providing these children with books on audio tape and video tape, the additional exposure to print will enhance their readiness to learn. These two methods will not detract from the time that the teacher spends in direct instruction and will not take away from classroom learning time as tapes can be viewed during free time and non-instructional time.

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